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William Blake's Anticipation of the Individualistic Revolution

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WILLIAM BLAKE'S ANTICIPATION OF THE INDIVIDUALISTIC REVOLUTION

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THE ANCIENT WORLD: SELF IN STATE.

Place of Individualism

Individualism in practice is as old as Life itself; but individualism in theory is essentially a product of modern thought. Indeed, until certain other problems had been raised, and certain distinctions made, a conscious theory of individualism was impossible. It has ever been sporadic, rather than continuous in its development, each exponent of the theory seeming to arrive at his conclusions independently, instead of criticising and synthesizing or transcending previous views. Its exponents ever tend to swing the pendulum too far to one side, thus thought is affected too greatly by temperament, but individualism has a very real value for life as well as for philosophy. While, in its extreme form it fails to be practical, it is nevertheless a strong, wholesome corrective of too great sociality, in which the individual is lost in the mass. As long, however, as the self was only part of a political state, or a heavenly "City of God" no philosophy of the self could possibly arise even from those who were strong individualists.

Self in the State in Greek Thought

This subsumption of the self in a political state is characteristic of Greek philosophy. Throughout its course we find no sense of conflict between Man and the world, no diremption of thought and thing, no separation of self and society. All is harmony. Man is a microcosm: the world is a macrocosm, and is Man writ large. Whether, as with the Milesian school, the philosopher's attention is directed toward the world, or whether, as with the sophists and the three great Greek thinkers, the attention is directed toward Man, the result is the

same. There is never a suggestion of discord; the passage from thought to thing, and from thing to thought, is natural and unquestioned. In all this harmony, however, the self is lost; Man is a part of the world and is subsumed under the category of Being. Even where the Stoics introduced such modern ideas as world-citizenship and humanity they still left the self a microscopic counterpart of the world.

CHRISTIANITY—THE SOUL AND THE CHURCH.

The rise of Christianity bringing into the Pagan world the idea of the negagtion of the world for the sake of the soul, led the way toward the modern world of contradictions. The value placed by Christianity upon the soul gives the first suggestion of a philosophic basis for individualism. St. Augustine, like the later Descartes, worked through doubt. To doubt is to think; to think implies a subject and an object, and these functions of consciousness are united in a unitary personality of the soul. This idea of the unitary personality of the soul is an attempt at philosophical individualism, as is St. Augustine's emphasis on the Will as the core of personality. But this idea of the self as a soul is partial. It cannot include the joy, the value, the happiness of life; it considers only its austere dignity. Man is not spirit only, hence the soul cannot satisfy all the demands of Life.

Rise of Fundamental Oppositions

In St. Augustine's idea of the soul as a personality an advance was made. When the medieval, religious votaries renounced the world for the salvation of the individual soul they prepared the way for modern individualism. Not

the value of the world only, but the worth of human life began to count, and so, throughout medieval thought arose gradually the contradictions that form so large a portion of modern thought. First were separated the soul and the world; then, later, with Realism and Nominalism we have the opposition of the universal and the individual. The individualism of the Nominalists, however, is verbal rather than substantial, concerned rather with forms of thought, than with realities of Life. Intellect and Will we find opposed sharply in the conflict between Aquinas and Duns Scotus, opposed without any notion of their fundamental connection. Duty and freedom, good and bad, inner and outer, arise as opposed pairs until by the time of Descartes we have, as it were, two worlds; a sharp dualism in each department of Life, and each world seemingly separated as far asunder as the poles—further, indeed, for there seemed no possibility of connection between them.

DESCARTES: MIND AND BODY.

When Descartes, following the same argument as had his predecessor, St. Augustine, developed his famous *"cogito ergo sum,"* and divided the *res cogitans* from the *res extensa,* he gave to modern thought still another contradiction, the dualism of mind and body, and materialist and rationalist, occasionalist and vitalist have ever since been wrestling with the problem. During the first period of modern philosophy when the attention was first turned towards nature, Man was more or less neglected; but this neglect was very different from the identification of man and nature in ancient philosophy. The contra-

dictions were present during the modern period but one side only was emphasized.

Jus Naturale Grotius

The development of natural rights turned attention to man's place in society. Of this Descartes had taken little or no account. Yet, until it was recognized that Man was made not only to obey the laws of society, but to insist upon his rights as a human being, until then, no real development of either individualism or of socialism was possible. The first philosopher to develop this idea of *jus naturale* was Hugo Grotius, whose social philosophy gave to man egoistic and benevolent impulses, rights as well as duties, society as well as self. His benevolent optimism saved him from portraying a state such as Hobbes showed in his *status naturalis;* while his social and nationalistic attitude prevented his assuming an egoistic, individualistic attitude.

Hobbes

Now that Man is found to be endowed with rights as well as bound by laws, it is possible for Hobbes to come forward and to insist upon these "inalienable rights" as the primary facts of life and to make law secondary and unnatural even while necessary. Thus we find Hobbes purely materialistic. "Every part of the universe is body and that which is not body is no part of the universe."[1] Even man's conduct is a purely relative affair. The ego is empirical, a merely animal ego life the self of Peer Gynt. Man, in the *status naturalis* lives in a state of war, "and such war as is of every man against every man,"[2] each seeking his own *rights* to the exclusion of the *rights* of others. This state, while natural, could not continue, and so from the *status naturalis,* man emerged into the *status civilis* by means of a social contract, each giving up some-

Status Naturalis and Status Civilis

[1] Hobbes, "Leviathan," p. 844.
[2] Hobbes, "Leviathan," p. 64, Lat. ed. Tr.

thing in order to keep the remainder. A state of law is thus not natural but necessary.

It will be seen that this empiricism, this crass egoism of Hobbes, while it recognizes the gulf between self and society, and between rights and law, does not bridge the gulf, and, indeed leaves no room whatever for a real self. The merely empirical "Me" which he discusses is not a *self* at all. The contrast between rights and law, however, is now a permanent and abiding contrast for thought.

With the problems of *jus* and *lex,* of ego and society, of mind and body, at hand, there arose the problem of knowledge, when Locke raised the question as to how our knowledge is to be obtained. This turned the attention of philosophy from the outer to the inner world, from matter to mind, but in the effort to deduce all phenomena from necessary, rational grounds, the philosopher of the Enlightenment failed to develop an idea of selfhood that was more than empirical. They could defend or oppose the Hobbist Ego, but they could not transcend it.

Reaction

During the remainder of the century English philosophy consisted, for the most part, in fact almost entirely, of the refutation of the theories set forth in the *Leviathan.* This great reaction against Hobbes divided into two separate attacks, one directed against his egoism, the other against his relativism. These took the form of two great struggles; the first a struggle for rationality, the second a struggle for sociality. Both were opposed to the struggle for individuality.

THE STRUGGLE FOR RATIONALITY.

Cudworth and Clark

Against the relativity of Hobbes there arose in the search for rationality the school that upheld

"eternal and immutable morality." Foremost among them stand Cudworth and Clark, extreme Thomists, insisting on the dignity of the moral law and utterly neglecting any of its practical utilitarian, relative aspects. Cudworth maintained that Good is good always and forever, just as black is black and white is white. Things are alike because they have the nature of likeness, and "Omnipotent Will cannot make Things Like or Equal to one another, without the Natures of Likeness and Equality."[1] In this stern moralism man is regarded not as a member of society primarily but as a moral agent under strict obligation to perform virtuous deeds. He takes account of one aspect only of man's nature and just so far his system lacks breadth and scope. Clarke, whose system deduced from mathematical instead of geometrical laws, is almost the same, is likewise wanting in completeness; both try to make the good, rational, and evil, irrational and absurd.

Butler and Cool Self-love

Butler, who continued this line of thought, emphasizes not so much the nationality and logical necessity of the obligation to the good, as the power and reasonableness of conscience in the control of the soul. Butler, had he been concerned less with the salvation of the soul and more with Man's position in the world, might have anticipated Blake, but his "cool, reasonable self-love"[2] is too abstract to be termed individualism. Nevertheless, he does stand against that form of altruism which, benevolent toward others, neglects the ego. While connecting public and private welfare, Butler considered that public welfare was often emphasized at the expense of private welfare. Though he thinks conscience

[1] Cudworth, "A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality." Chap. II., p 15.
[2] Butler, Sermons III., p 39.

ought absolutely to "govern the world,"[1] still he says that "men in fact as much and as often contradict that part of their nature which respects self, and which leads them to their own *private good* and happiness, as they contradict that part of it which respects *society* and tends to *public good*."[2] But by this Butler seems to mean that people neglect the salvation of the soul for the material good of others. Thus the "cool self-love" that Butler advocates is only care for the soul, not at all a true individualism such as that which Blake will later preach.

Price. Rectitude Connected with Volition

In the realm of pure ethics it is Richard Price who continues the struggle for rationality. The first to use the term *intuition,* he also makes a step forward by connecting his idea of rectitude with volition, though he does this only in a theoretical manner. The central idea of his ethics is intellectual and not volitional, as is Blake's view. Unlike Blake's view also is his limited, partial view of man, which regards him as an ethical animal rather than as a human being.

Rationalists and Empiricists

These opponents of the relativism of the Hobbist philosophy are all of them complete rationalists. Not experience, but reason, is the standard to which appeal must be made; not the *a posteriori,* but the *a priori,* necessary laws of the mind must determine the moral and intellectual laws. Hobbes looking at actual life and experience is pessimistic as well as relative, but the rationalists looking at the eternal, necessary laws, see no reason for anything but complete optimism. Unfortunately, their optimism is due to the unconquerable desire of the eighteenth century to find necessary rational grounds for all things,

[1] Butler, Sermons II., p. 42.
[2] Butler, Sermons II., p 21.

and to disregard the natural human instincts and needs of the individual.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIABILITY.

Cumberland Benevolence

Not only was the relativism of Hobbes opposed in a struggle for rationality, but his egoism was also opposed in a great struggle for sociality. The first to attack the egoism of Hobbes was Cumberland, who in 1672 published his *Treatise of the Laws of Nature,* in which he established a theory of benevolence as natural to men and their proper aim. He says in part, "the greatest benevolence of every rational agent toward all, constitutes the happiest state of all in general, and of each in particular, as far as is in their power to procure it, and is necessarily requisite in order to attain the happiest state to which they can aspire; and therefore the common good of all is the supreme law."[1]

This benevolence is directly opposed to the selfish egoism of the Hobbist philosophy and neglects the anti-social impulses of man, as Hobbes had neglected the social impulses.

Shaftesbury

Shaftesbury, who also attacked the egoism of Hobbes, established as an ideal an almost pagan idea of harmony. The different elements in man's nature must be in accord and in proportion. He states that, "No one can be vicious or ill except either:

1. By the deficiency or weakness of natural affections.
2. By the violence of the selfish.
3. By such as are plainly unnatural."[2]

"Thus the wisdom of what rules, and is first

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[1] Cumberland, "Laws of Nature," p. 41.

[2] Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit." Bk. II., p. 112.

and chief in nature has made it to be according to the private interest and good of every one to work toward the general good which, if a creature ceases to promote, he is actually so far wanting to himself, and ceases to promote his own happiness and welfare.[1]

Contrast Shaftesbury and Cumberland

Shaftesbury thus makes the public and private interests inseparable, seeking the golden mean between them and condemning an excess of either. Furthermore, since he makes man part of a system and makes virtue or vice depend on man's place in this system, society is just as much an instinct as egoism. He bases his system on sociality, whereas Cumberland found benevolence to be an ideal not to be completely realized in an imperfect society. Where Cumberland found it difficult to place man in society, Shaftesbury finds man already there, and places his happiness in the balance of the social and anti-social instincts.

Mandeville Repudiation of Good, but Not of Standard Good

Opposed to these philosophers, and standing on the side of egoism, but at a much lower level than Hobbes, we find Mandeville, who makes of virtue merely a device of the ruling class much in the same manner as that in which Nietszche later developed his theory. He says, "The lawyers and other wise men that have labored for the establishment of society have endeavored to make the people they were to govern believe that it was more beneficient for everybody to conquer than to indulge his appetites, and much better to mind the public that what seemed his private interests."[2] It was their interest "to preach up public-spiritedness, that they might reap the

[1] Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit." Bk. II., p. 114.

[2] Mandeville, "The Fable of the Bees," Vol. 1, p. 28.

fruits of the labor and self-denial of others."[1]

Startling as this may sound, Mandeville, while repudiating the pursuit of goodness, does not repudiate the moral law. Good is still good. The standard for him remains unchanged, even though he may rebel against it.

Apart from this development of English philosophy through the defense of or the opposition to either the egoism or the relativism of Hobbes, there had developed also empiricism with Locke (1632-1704), who believed all knowledge to come from the senses, and also the school of Natural Philosophy led by Newton, which laid emphasis on external facts.

Hutcheson the Moral Sense

Opposed to Hobbes and to Mandeville in this struggle for sociality was Francis Hutcheson, who supported the claim of Shaftesbury that public and private interest are inseparable, but supported it upon a totally different basis. Hutcheson is not in any way cheaply altruistic, but bases his theory upon the oneness of humanity. He does not consistently develop this idea, but it is there. He claims "that the author of nature has given us a *moral sense* to direct our actions and to give us still nobler pleasures, so that while we are only intending the good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest private good."[2] By this *moral* sense we instinctively approve the good, and dispute the evil. Hutcheson thus disputes the egoism of Hobbes, while avoiding the theory of eternal and immutable morality. Where Shaftesbury had made of men a society, a system, in which each must be related to all, as the part to the whole, the instinctive approval of the good which

Hutcheson's Idea of Humanity

[1] Ibid, p. 34.

[2] Hutcheson, "Concerning Good and Evil." Section 1, VIII., p. 116.

Hutcheson emphasizes is due to a sense of the unity of humanity. We cannot say "What's Hecuba to us or we to Hecuba?" without realizing that all mankind is indissolubly united, and that our approval or disapproval of actions depends upon this, and not upon self-interest. In fact, it is essentially immediate and disinterested. This is an idea far above the usual idea of mankind current in the eighteenth century. In its scope, it approaches more nearly to the breadth of Blake's conception of humanity.

Adam Smith

The theory of a *moral sense* which should produce approval and disapproval was further developed by Adam Smith. Conceiving the idea that this moral sense must have an origin, he finds that origin in *sympathy*. Hutcheson had said that we are all one. As this is so, we can put ourselves in the other person's place mentally and feel as he feels. Right action will then arouse approval. Little of the ordinary distinctions between egoism and altruism remain here. Evolving from sympathy we have the sense of merit or demerit which determines the justice of our approval and disapproval.

Sympathy, is thus the keynote in our judgment of the actions of others. It is also the keynote in self-judgment. One's own actions arouse sympathy, an idea of merit, or demerit, and a consequent approval or disapproval in one's own mind, in "that impartial spectator," which is conscience.

Summary

We have thus far shown how, on the one hand, the eighteenth century opposed the relativism of Hobbes, and attempted to formulate a theory of morals that should have an external and immutabble basis in rationality. We have shown how

in this attempt only a partial view of man was taken, and all the rich content of his life being neglected, the view must fail to give any lasting satisfaction.

We have shown, on the other hand, how, when the eighteenth century opposed the egoism of Hobbes, developing a theory of benevolence as natural to man, and based on an innate "moral sense." This view of society was, however, artificial, and failed almost entirely to account for the native individualistic impulses of man. It failed entirely to transcend the altruism egoism opposition or to develop a view which could contain both elements. All these thinkers have emphasized the contrast between *ego* and *alter,* in a more or less external way; but no one of them has even suggested a form of individualism which should be more than selfishness. Even the "cool self-love" of Butler considers only the soul-need of moral salvation, and has no suggestion of a self which shall consider all of human life and not merely its moral aspect. Mind, indeed, rules during this period of thought, but it is mind in the strictly rationalistic sense, formal, abstract, and widely separated from volition and feeling.

No Real Self

I.

BLAKE'S REACTION ON XVIIITH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY.

In 1781 Kant was to destroy forever this *a priori* rationalism, as well as pure empiricism by showing that both are needed to give both form and content to this show world of ours; but, in England there arose one who in his own way was likewise a world destroyer; who was to repudiate rationalism and empiricism, and was to preach for the first time in the history of thought the cult of the individual.

This man was William Blake. Born in 1757, when rationalism and moralism were in their supremacy, he never for a moment adopted these views. Brought up as a follower of Swedenborg, Blake had his impulsive Irish temperament intensified by mysticism; and a mystic he remained all his life. For him, as for Kant, the material world was but a show-world. Nature is illusion, and natural philosophy is the study of illusion. It was this truth that Blake strives in various ways to make vital; and it places him avowedly in opposition to the materialists and empiricists, such as Hobbes, Bacon, Locke and Newton, the last three of whom he denounces as followers of Satan, or the external world. Blake is in every respect profoundly mystical. For him there is but one real world. All his parables, all his prophetic books, and many of his poems are just the means he employs to express this fact. He not only thought this truth, but lived it so completely that Swinburne says of him, that "he never really came over to our side of life, but remained on the other bank, or called to us from half-way across the stream."[1] Because of this his language, as well as his thought, is often obscure as though he found it difficult, and indeed, impossible to tell in ordinary phraseology what he saw and heard when, in his visions, he passed behind the veil of Maya. But certain he is that the spiritual values are the greatest values, and the material values, valueless without them.

Mysticism of Blake

That a man with this view would react strongly against the conventional formal philosophy of the rationalistic eighteenth century, is natural. That he should have developed in contrast to this philosophy a theory of intense in-

His Individualism

[1] Swinburne, "A Critical Essay on Blake," p. 7.

dividualism which should utterly transcend the animal egoism of Hobbes, and anticipate, and even in part transcend the later individualism of the nineteenth century, this, was indeed not to be expected. Had he phrased his theory in philosophical instead of mystical terms, he would have been hailed as leader of the individualistic revolution, but, acclaimed or not, he does anticipate all that is worth while in the individualism of Stirner, of Nietzsche and of Emerson. His criticism of rationalism, of moralism, and of the absorption of self in the world is, when stripped of its obscure wording, wonderfully keen in its analysis.

II.

IRRATIONALISM OF BLAKE.

Although Blake is generally classed with Swedenborg and Boehme among the visionaries, he is not like them, sectarian, but is universal. Where they directed their attacks against the Church and endeavored to establish a new theology, Blake's thoughts were confined in no such way. He concerned himself not with theology, but with philosophy, not with the Church, but with life; not with sects, but with humanity. It is just because rationalism and moralism and benevolence do not satisfy human need that Blake condemns them.

Totality of Blake's Views

Rationalism chains the spirit of man to a cold rock, and extinguishes the fire of enthusiasm.[1] Moralism spreads over him dark branches that exclude the light of day.[2] Altruism and benevolence neglect self-government.[3] A man cannot give himself until he has a self to give. Blake reaches thus the important and very modern view that no one department of thought may

[1] Blake, "Book of Urizen."
[2] Blake, "Book of Ahania."
[3] Blake, "Book of Los."

monopolize man. Not rationalism, not moralism, not altruism, but life, is what humanity seeks, and this may be found only in complete self-realization. Only in this complete self-realization can these lesser partial phases find a place. Blake is the first thinker to give a sufficient place to self-realization, and to self-hood. That this contribution was not recognized, is due partly to his obscure life, and more to his mystical phraseology. This with his dangerous reputation as a visionary kept him a closed book to the *respectable* reading public.

Blake's reaction against the eighteenth-century philosophy, we shall thus consider under the three heads mentioned above. They are: (1) irrationalism, (2) immoralism, (3) individualism. In all three respects Blake is undoubtedly the first philosopher to voice this rebellion against the rationalism, moralism, and soulless altruism of the enlightenment. This note of rebellion was to be again struck in the nineteenth century by Stirner and Nietzsche, and sounded so that all the world might hear.

That Blake's influence was not immediate is all the more reason why he should be given the credit of being the first, now that the fact is known.

Rationalism and Restraint Evil

The irrationalism of Blake was due to his idea that rationalism, instead of being desirable, is essentially evil, and must be renounced. The reasoning power is the source of evil, in that it draws attention to the material world, and to the conquest of this world. It is the passive element in life, and thus again evil, because it bounds and restrains. Blake is opposed to this, for he is essentially the preacher of energy. Like

Nietzsche, who says, "Eternal vigor of life is the important thing;"[1] to him "energy is eternal delight."[2] It is the original element, and he emphasizes it because its nature is creative and inspiring. It is in contrast to this that reason is evil. It cannot create; it can only control. It is confirming, not boundless. Thus Blake formed his first great pair of contraries. "With contraries there is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence. From these contraries spring good and evil. Good is the passive, and obeys reason, (hence for Blake it is really the bad). Evil is the active springing from energy. "Good is heaven, evil is hell."[3]

Transvaluation

It must be understood, however, that to Blake hell was heaven, and heaven was hell. He defines hell as the "passion of enthusiasm."[4] In this transvaluation of values, Blake would out-Nietszche Nietszche.

Blake believed that it is only in his fallen state (by which Blake means imprisoned in the world of nature,) that man, under the dominion of reason recognizes good and evil. But the chief evil of reason is, not the effect of its restraint, but the restraint itself. "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling."[5] To Blake, reason is "the eternal No"—the egoist. It means with him the faculty that entices us to claim exclusive reality for our own sensations and build up selfhood's dwelling in memories of our own experiences; the great "chaos" which pronul-

[1] Nietzsche, "Human All Too Human," p. 178.
[2] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 4, Proverbs.
[3] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 3.
[4] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 23, Blake.
[5] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 4, Blake.

gates "laws of prudence" for its own protection and calls them the laws of God. It is what we call materialism, and has caused all evil and misery, for once we believe that our selfhoods or spectres, as Blake names them, alone exist, we seek to feed them and preserve them at whatever sorrow and toil to others."[1]

Thus we see that to Blake it is the subjection of men to material forms, to moral laws, and social codes that has caused the division in their minds between imagination which is "God," or "the eternal man," and reason which is Satan or fallen man. "Men," he says, take two contraries, which are called qualities, with which every substance is clothed. They name them good and evil. From them they make an abstract which is a negation, not only of the substance from which it is derived a murderer of its own body, but also a murderer of every divine member. It is the reasoning power. An abstract objecting power that negatives everything. This is the holy reasoning power, and in its holiness is closed the abomination of desolation."[2] Elsewhere Satan says, "I am God, O sons of men; I am your rational power. Am I not Bacon and Newton who teach humility to man?"[3]

Rationalism Due to Finitude

From these questions may be discovered Blake's attitude, both toward rationalism and toward the natural empirical school of philosophy. Throughout his works he used the names of Locke, Bacon and Newton as illustrations of the type of thought which he abhorred. How much this attitude is like the latter attitude of Stirner and Nietzsche may be seen from the following. Stirner affirms that "reason which gives

[1] Ellis and Yeats, The Works of Blake, vol. 1, p. 248.
[2] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 10.
[3] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 54.

general laws, puts the individual man in irons. If reason rules, persons succumb."[4]

Nietzsche likewise exclaims in truly irrationalistic manner: "Rationality at any price is dangerous as a life-undermining force."[1]

All three men thus affiliated through their consistent repudiation of rationalism because of its restraint. In his eternal nature man could perceive infinity. "It is only the five senses that barred man against the infinite."[2] "For man has closed himself up till he sees all things through the chinks of his cavern."[3] This is because under the dominion of space and time, reason is divided from imagination under three degrees, the physical, the mental and the imaginative or spiritual. In a reproduction of the Laocoon Blake represents these degrees as God, Satan and Adam struggling in the toils of nature, the devouring serpent who has ensnared them. Because since his fall, man is the child of space and time, Reason is thus enabled to weave about him the hypocritical "net of religion" as both Blake and Stirner call it.

Thus because rationalism keeps man from complete development, and limits him to the world, Blake repudiates it. Like Kant, Blake realizes that the material world is a world of phenomena which we perceive under the form of space and time. Like Kant, Blake preaches that reason, whether *a posteriori* or *a priori,* cannot transcend this material world; but unlike Kant, Blake says that we may pierce the veil of illusion not by will or morality, but by creative imagination, the spiritual vision, the complete self-real-

[1] Nietzsche, "Birth of Tragedy," p. 191.
[2] Blake, "Europe, a Prophecy," p. 8.
[3] Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 14.
[4] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," 1-137.

ization. In taking this view, Blake is far broader than Kant, whose stern moralism can never satisfy the human heart or reason. Reason, since it is concerned with the results of the five senses, divides man from his imagination, his eternal nature. It curbs, and hence weakens. In this weakness and passivity of reason, lies its essential evil for Blake. He is above all, the preacher of the ideal of *strength*. Imagination is good, just because it is a form of energy; and of positive strength. Blake has no suggestion of the weakness, the morbid in his irrationalism, such as the later irrationalists, Nietzsche and even Ibsen have shown. He is essentially positive even in his negations; that is he never leaves the mere negation, but emphasizes the positive, constructive, strengthening ideals.

We may now see that where, as in discussions of irrationalism, the first place is usually given to Stirner it ought rightly to belong to Blake, for Blake anticipates Stirner in all his main ideas. Stirner, rebelling against the *humanity* of Feuerbach, complained that the individual was lost. It was all mankind instead of man. Let us note his own words: "God and mankind are concerned for themselves. Let me then likewise concern myself for myself, who am equally with God the nothing of all others, who am my all, who am the only one. (der Einzige.)"[1] "Nothing is more to me than myself."[2] In this way Stirner reacts upon that form of humanity which forgets that humanity is made up of individuals only. "In the law of reason man determines himself out of himself."[3] Reason, which gives general laws, puts the individual man in irons by the thoughts of human-

Irrationalism: Blake and Stirner

[1] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 5.
[2] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 6.
[3] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 64.

ity."[1] "If reason rules, the person succumbs."[2] "That I make myself and *be,* this alone is reason, be I ever so irrational."[3] In these sayings we find Stirner putting in another form the same idea that had been expounded earlier by Blake; namely, that reason bounds and curbs and prevents the freedom of the individual.

Blake and Ibsen

But Blake anticipates also the irrationalism of Ibsen, for he, too, believed that the "minority is always right."[4] Almost a century earlier than *Brand* or *An Enemy of the People,* in which Ibsen voices his idea that while people praise benevolence, they punish its performance, almost a century earlier Blake made Los, the Spirit of Freedom, exclaim: "You smile with pomp and rigor; you talk of benevolence and virtue; I act benevolence and virtue, and am murdered time after time."[5] Where Ibson disclaims in *Ghosts* against "law and order,"[6] Blake had earlier declared that "Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without improvement are the roads of genius;"[7] and again, "He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence."[8]

Blake and Emerson

Perhaps of all the nineteenth century individualists our own Emerson repeats most nearly the irrationalism of Blake. Emerson says, "We pray to be conventional. But the wary Heaven takes care you shall not be if there is anything good in you. Dante was very bad company, and was never invited to dinner."[9] And again "Life

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[1] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 137.
[2] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 138.
[3] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 461.
[4] Ibsen, "An Enemy of the People," p. 134.
[5] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 91.
[6] Ibsen, "Ghosts," p. 220.
[7] [8] Blake, "Proverbs of Hell."
[9] Emerson, "Society and Solitude," p. 7.

spurns all systems, breaks all barriers."[1] The only sin is limitation."[2] Like Blake, Emerson is sane, and has nothing of the morbid taint which characterizes the individualitists on the Continent. Neither Blake nor Emerson is a decadent. Emerson's irrationalism while phrased in the language of the world declaims against the rationalism which curbs and bounds, and in this, as in the discussion of immoralism and individualism we shall see that Blake anticipated him.

III.

THE IMMORALISM OF BLAKE.

Immoralism of Blake

Through the net of religion "reason creates the moral law and enslaves not the intellect only, but the will, the energies of man. Because of this creation by the dual, uninspired reason, and because it bounds the energies, Blake repudiates the moral law, and thus connects his irrationalism with his immoralism, and also with his energism. We have seen that Mandeville, while upholding evil rather than good, did not at all change the standard of good and evil. Blake, however, reverses the moral standard. He is the first philosopher to do this. Like Milton's Satan, he exclaimed "Evil, be thou my good."[3] Thus, in fact, the first transvaluation of all values is accomplished, not by Nietzsche, but by Blake. He does not say that morality is not, but that morality as outlined by society is immorality. The reversal of the moral standard is due to the fact that Blake's ideal is not passive goodness, but dynamic strength; not moral restraint, but free, creative energy. Goodness, which is not natural, but is the result of submission to an external

[1] Emerson, "Society and Solitude," p. 7.
[2] Emerson, "Society and Solitude," p. 171, Everyman Ed.
[3] Milton, "Paradise Lost," p. 68.

moral law, is really evil. Goodness, Blake would define as the creative energy of the strong intellect, and while the weak may succumb to an external law, the strong should rise above it. It is just this foisting of an external moral law upon the strong natures of the world that breeds hypocrisy and injustice. "One law for the lion and the ox is oppression."[1]

Strength and Weakness

The passive patience of the ox (or ordinary moral, but dull person,) is not a sign of goodness, but of stupidity. Blake would here seem to countenance a double moral code, such as that which Nietzsche later called *master-morality* and *slave-morality,* but while he feels that the strong are rightly the first to rebel against the moral law, he considers the law itself is evil. It came into being only when man bound by his finitude looked only upon finite things and finite relations, and when the strong threw off its yoke they will free not themselves only, but all mankind. Since finite, dulling reason is the cause of the creation of the moral law, emancipation must come through the transcending of reason by imagination which can perceive the holiness of the infinite, and receive from it strength to repudiate both the bounds of reason and the hypocrisy of the moral law.

There are throughout the works of Blake, but especially in the *Prophetic Books* dealing with the fall and deliverance of man, and using physiology and psychology in their development; many sayings which indicate clearly his attitude toward morality, as compared with strength and intelligence. Some of the principal ones are as follows:

1. "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the

[1] Blake, picture, p. 22, Vol. III., Ellis and Yeats Ed.

horses of instruction."[1]

2. "The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow."[2]

3. "Expect poison from the standing water."[3]

4. "He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence."[4]

Good and Evil

5. "Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without improvement are the roads of genius."[5]

6. "Exuberance is beauty."[6]

7. "Enough or too much."[7]

8. "You never know what is enough, unless you know what is more than enough."[8]

These sayings which Blake calls "Proverbs of Hell," serve to show his complete reversal of the usual moral law, and also serve to show clearly his hatred of moral restraint. This was due to the fact that he thought restraint necessarily hypocritical since the motive, the inner spirit was to him the only truly real, eternal element in man. His mood, however, is never the ethical mood of sufficiency, but always that of superabundance or of want, as these have been defined in a recent philosophical work.[9] Like Nietzsche, Blake's ideal is *beyond good and evil,* but he found for his superman not the maxim *"Be hard,"* but the maxim, "I will create;" for his superman is not a "a blonde beast," but the great creative genius. Like Stirner, he would say: "I am my own creator."[10] To Blake, redemption can never come through doing good, through moral-

[1] Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell"; "Proverbs of Hell."

[2] Ibid, "Proverbs of Hell."

[3] [8] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell"; "Proverbs of Hell."

[9] Shaw, C. G., "The Ego and Its Place in the World," p. 13-20.
p. 13-20.

[10] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 4.

ity, redemption can come only through faith and imagination. "If morality were Christianity, Socrates would be the Saviour."[1] Blake's chief biographer sums up his moral attitude in these words: "Energy acted leads to good; restrained, it leads to stagnation, and stagnation leads to corruption."[2] Throughout the Prophetic Books in a seemingly chaotic, but really intricate orderly manner, runs this story of the Fall of Man under the dominion of Reason, with its attendant restraint and hypocritical moral code, and his final redemption through energy and imagination. The division of imagination and spirit is the beginning of selfhood. Reason establishes logic, which is the chain which locks men up into forgetfulness and necessity. Cold reason and fiery energy chained together form an orb of fire which, in true Schopenhauerian language, Blake calls "the human illusion.[3] This human illusion or created man, is locked up within the five senses, and forgets his eternal life."[4]

Virtue and Vice

Like good and evil, virtue and vice are, in Blake's view, naturally reversed; or rather both are delusions, due to the cramping of man's intellect under the vale of reason. "Holiness is not the price of entrance into heaven."[5] Reason, by his evil laws, kills love and forms the decalogue. These commandments, Blake denotes as "forms of dark delusion." Churches, hospitals, palaces, were built like nets, to catch the joys of eternity till, like a dream, eternity was obliterated."[6]

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[1] Ellis and Yeats, Works of Blake, Vol. I., p. 125.
[2] Ibid, Vol. II., p. 78.
[3] Blake, Works, Vol. II., Ellis and Yeats Ed., on Book of Los.
[4] Blake, Works, Vol. III., Book of Urizen, p. 23.
[5] Blake, "Why Men Enter Heaven," small ed., p. 252.
[6] Blake, Works, Vol. III., "Song of Los," p. 2.

This emphasis on joy is characteristic of Blake's attitude. No act lacking spontaneity and joy could be called worthy. This idea is parallel to his idea of strength and energism, for the strong man does as he desires, and as a consequence acts with joy.

Strength and Joy

As the five senses narrow man's outlook, so "thought changed the infinite to a serpent"[1] "and man fled from its face into the forests of night." By this forest, Blake means the physical sciences which man studied when he could no longer dare to study the infinite. He is afraid. "Man became an Angel and God a tyrant crowned,[2] and humanity became a weeping infant."[3] Over the doors of the temples they wrote: 'Thou shalt not,' and over the chimneys: 'Fear' is written."[4] Man has become a slave of the moral law and of reason. As Stirner would put it, "He is possessed by the good and virtue,[5] and in the form of morality Christianity holds him prisoner.[6]

Against the God of traditional theism Blake makes a firm stand, as against moralism. He is the god of this world only, Satan, or the reasoning power. Like Ibsen in *Brand,* Blake complains that the traditional God is venerable and hoary, where he would make God, eternal energy and the creation "a deed of lawful energy,"[7] He says "that to make God wise, philanthropic, gentle and good is to lower your image of God not less than if you had predicated of Him exactly the reverse qualities."[8] The God of this world, has power only over this world and his

[1] [2] "Europe, a Prophecy," pp. 8-10.
[3] "Jerusalem," p. 81.
[4] "Europe," p. 8-10.
[5] "The Ego and His Own," p. 57.
[6] Ibid, p. 58.
[7] "Book of Los," Chap. I.
[8] Swinburne, "A Critical Essay on Blake," p. 150.

power ends with death; but the only perfect man is of eternity. When man perceives what he was he was and shall be the chain of reason and religion relax.

The God of this world has power over appearances, but not over realities. Appearances and relations he can alter, but cannot change one individual life to another or reverse the laws of personality. "In eternity, one thing never changes into another thing. Each identity is eternal.[1] Virtue and vice are changeable and perishable, but the underlying individual life is imperishable."[2] The God of reason, or Jehovah is the author of the decalogue, the chain of the moral law. For this Blake has no use. It belongs to the *slave-morality*. "No virtue," he exclaims, "can exist without breaking these ten commandments."[3] What are called vices in the natural world are the highest virtues in the spiritual world."[4]

To Blake, God or the divine nature is simply the human raised to the highest power. "God only acts or is in existing beings or men."[5] God is the free, creative spirit, the unfallen part of man. Thus man has virtue only by his reason or understanding, not by his imagination and genius. "Man can become as God only by resisting the 'god of this world,' or reason. If Prometheus cannot, Zeus will not, deliver us. Man must fight his way by impulsive energy and energetic faith, and having done so, Hell will appear as Heaven and Heaven as Hell. The Abyss, once entered, green pastures appear, and the paradise of resignation will appear as a place

[1] Blake, Muses' Library Ed., p. 250.
[2] Swinburne, "A Critical Essay on Blake," p. 27.
[3] "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 23.
[4] Ellis and Yeats, Vol. II., p. 145.
[5] Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," p. 16.

of emptiness or desolation.[1] Here again is the transvaluation of values. Neither good nor evil preserve their ordinary meanings. With Stirner, Blake would have exclaimed: "What's good? What's bad? I, myself, am my concern, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither has meaning for me."[2] Blake's stand against traditional theism often makes his Christianity seem doubtful. In the orthodox sense, it was more than doubtful, yet Blake believed himself to be truly a follower of Christ, and uses Christ as the symbol of free, creative imagination.

Like Bernard Shaw, however, Blake seems to regard the theistic Heaven as a most uncomfortable place.

According to Blake, the truly moral will not attempt to keep the moral laws. This, of course, has been true of reformers throughout the history of the world. Blake believes that "virtue should be impulsive, and that unimpulsive virtue is always Pharisaic."[3] In his own words:

> "To be good only is to be a God or else a Pharisee."[4]

Nietzsche, in the same manner, speaks of "the necessity of crime imposed on the titanically-striving individual,[5] and by this implies the same idea as that in which Blake believes: namely, that the strong individual who acts from impulse, may, and often will, act in defiance of the moral law. As Blake's chief editor phrases it, "The ethical impulse always breaks the ethical law."[6] Indeed, this law is always established for the majority. According to the ideas of both Blake and

[1] Swinburne, "Essay on Blake," p. 220.
[2] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 6.
[3] Swinburne, "Critical Essay on Blake," p. 246.
[4] Blake, Works, small ed., p. 116.
[5] Nietzsche, "Birth of Tragedy," p. 79.
[6] Ellis and Yeats Ed., Works of Blake, Vol. I., p. 240.

Nietzsche, he acts rightly who so spurns the common law that he may follow a higher. Christ did this, as Blake shows, when he picked corn on the Sabbath, ate with the publicans and sinners, and broke other ceremonial laws of the Hebrews that he might more freely follow the law of his own nature.[1]

Morality should be the aim of man, but not intelligence. Here also Blake approximates to Nietzsche's saying that, "The moral man is no nearer intelligence than the physical man."[2] Blake, moreover, in his discussion of the moral law, maintains that men punish real virtue just because it does transcend the moral law. In the *Song of Los,* Los, the Spirit of Freedom exclaims:

> "You smile with pomp and rigor,
> You talk of benevolence and virtue,
> I *act* benevolence and virtue, and
> am murdered time after time."[3]

How true this is all people know. The world, as history shows, has always crucified its redeemers. It was in this same spirit that Stirner, criticising Feuerbach, wrote: "You love man, but you torture the individual man, the egoist. Your philanthropy is the tormenting of men."[4]

When Blake casts aside the moral law in favor of strength, he casts aside also that which is the cardinal virtue of Geuillinex, namely, humility. Rather than any idea of "Despectio sui,"[5] Blake believes that man must trust himself to the uttermost. Since there is no "absentee God"[6] to help

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[1] Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," small ed., p. 192.
[2] Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human," p. 179.
[3] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 91.
[4] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 387.
[5] Geuillinex, "Ethica," Tr. 1 Cap. II., Sec. 2, par 2.
[6] Caryle, "Sartor Resartus," Everyman Ed., p. 15.

him look inwards, and follow the god who is his own spiritual nature.

> "Humility is only doubt
> and doth the sun and moon blot out."[1]

Then Blake asks:

> "Was Jesus humble, or did He give any
> proofs of humility?"[2]

And causes God to say:

"If thou humblest Thyself Thou humblest me.
Thou also dwellest in eternity.
Thou art a man. God is no more.
Thine own humanity learn to adore;
For that is My spirit of life."[3]

To Blake even self-sacrifice such as the vicarious death of Jesus implies not humility, but "honest triumphant pride"[4] and faith, both in the unique individuality and in the final value of spiritual forces. In his attack on humility Blake anticipates Stirner, who said: "Moral influence starts where humiliation begins. It is nothing else than humiliation and self-abasement.[5]

Immoralism Blake & Stirner

Throughout all this immoralism, this stern rebellion is against morality as developed into codes and laws, and so imposed on society. It is in no way a rebellion against the true worth or value of life. But man must be himself and an external law imposed from without is foreign to his nature. As we have already seen, Stirner later developed immoralism in The Ego and His Own. His utterances are more explosive in character, and far less coherent than the earlier views of Blake. To him, "Moral faith is as fanatical

[1] Blake, "Ideas of Good and Evil," small ed., p. 43.
[2] Ibid, p. 112.
[3] Blake, "Ideas of Good and Evil," small ed., p. 113.
[4] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 105.
[5] Blake, "Ideas of Good and Evil," p. 111.

as religious faith."[1] "The web of hypocrisy hangs on the frontiers of the two domains, morality and egoism."[2] To Stirner people who believe in morality or in a spiritual realm are possessed of "a fixed idea."[3] He would have put Blake in this class; for in spite of his immoralism, or rather in accord with it, Blake is a believer in, a seer of, the spiritual world beyond. Both men agree, however in their denunciation of conventional rationalism and moralism, but where Stirner speaks in the cause of the ego, Blake is immoralistic in the cause of strength and power.

Blake and Emerson

This ideal of strength allies Blake with Emerson, who also advocates it. Where Blake decries goodness because it is passive and weak, Emerson says: "Nature, as we know her, is no saint . . . Her darlings, the great, the strong, the beautiful, are not children of our law, do not come out of the Sunday school, nor weigh their food, nor punctually keep the commandments."[4] "The virtues of society are the vices of the saint. The terror of reform is the discovery that we must cast away our virtues."[5] Again he exclaims, "It is as easy for a strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak."[6] "The objection to conforming to usages is that it scatters your force."[7] Still more is he like Blake when he says, "No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to this or that; the only right is what is after my constitution the only wrong what is against it."[8] Society

[1] Stirner, "The Ego and His Own," p. 53.
[2] Ibid, p. 67.
[3] Ibid, p. 54.
[4] Emerson, "Experience," p. 239, Everyman Ed.
[5] Ibid, "Circles," pp. 1-176, Everyman Ed.
[6] Emerson, "Self-reliance," p. 43, Everyman Ed.
[7] Ibid, "Self-reliance," p. 33, Everyman Ed.
[8] Ibid, "Self-reliance," p. 35, Everyman Ed.

everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members."[1] All these quotations serve to show how really immoralistic Emerson is, in his regard for strength and individuality.

Not only did Blake anticipate the immoralism of Stirner and of Emerson, but also that of Ibsen. Ibsen, like Blake, rebels at current morality because it stifles and weakens, instead of supporting the individual. His ideal, however, is not so much the ideal of strength as it is the freedom of the individual from the bonds of the law. "Oh, that perpetual law and order;"[2] I often think that is what does all the mischief in this world of ours . . . I must have done with all this constraint and insincerity. I can endure it no longer. I must work my way out to freedom" . . . And we are, one and all, so pitifully afraid of the light."[3]

Blake and Ibsen

This is the burden of Ibsen's message in regard to moralism. More freedom, more light, more fresh air! We shut ourselves up in a "machine-sewn" order of things, and though it would unravel at a touch, we think it eternal and necessary and succumb to it. Unlike Blake, Ibsen, in his preaching of freedom is more or less morbid. He does not escape the taint of the decadents of the continent. His Nora, his Hedda Gabler, or Mrs. Alving, or Irene, or even Hilda Wangel with her plea for a "robust conscience" are abnormal in life and character. Blakehas nothing of this. He is thoroughly sane.

Immoralism: Blake and Wagner

In the great trilogy of the Niebelungenlied, Wagner joins the ranks of the immoralists. Like Blake, Wagner worships strength. His Siegfried

[1] Ibid, "Self-reliance," p. 32, Everyman Ed.
[2] Ibsen, "Ghosts," p. 220.
[3] Ibsen, "Ghosts," p. 225.

is the personification of strength. Wagner, cannot, however, create his strong man invulnerable. He knows no fear. His iron will conquers the material in the form of Fafner, the intellectual in the form of Wotan, but law and order must be preserved, and Siegfried falls. Wagner shows the impotence of the merely intellectual, the strength of the voluntaristic, but he fails, as did Ibsen, to achieve a union of the two or find aught but a pessimistic outcome. Blake is in strong contrast to this, for his immoralsm is never pessimistic; he never loses faith in the possibility of the ultimate redemption of man.

Immoralism: Blake and Nietzsche

Having compared or contrasted Blake with Stirner, Emerson, Ibsen and Wagner, having shown how he anticipates each and has their views without the decadent taint, let us see how he compares with that most talked-of immoralist, Frederic Nietzsche. Nietzsche, like Blake, believes in, nay, worships, strength. The "will to power" is his watchword. In method, too, he more nearly approaches Blake than any of the other immoralists. Many of his sayings might have been taken from Blake's "Proverbs of Hell." Nietzsche says, "Active sin is the properly Promethean virtue." Like Blake, he is against Christianity as it has been developed. He is more bitter than Blake, for he says "Christianity is the most extravagant burlesque of the moral theme to which mankind has hitherto been obliged to listen."[1] Blake believes in Christianity as preached by Jesus, but declaims against the formal elements historically developed. Nietzsche's superman is *beyond good and evil*. "The

[1] Nietzsche, "Birth of Tragedy," p. 9.

sting of conscience, like the gnawing of a dog at a stone is foolishness."[1]

Blake's real individual is likewise beyond good and evil, not because he has become hard, but because having passed behind the veil of Maya he perceives that "Everything is holy;" that good and evil are finite creations, and neither may partake of the eternal life of the spirit.

We have now seen that Blake anticipating the whole modern immoralistic revolution as he anticipated modern irrationalism, approximates to Stirner and Ibsen in his plea for freedom from law and order, and is like Wagner, Emerson and Nietzsche, in his ideal of strength and power. We have seen too that unlike Nietzsche and like only to Emerson, his revolt while dynamic and reaching to the foundations of things, is yet thoroughly sane and healthy. He is in no sense a decadent, and has no taint of the morbid pessimism that characterizes the immoralists of the nineteenth century.

III.

INDIVIDUALISM OF BLAKE.

The irrationalism and immoralism of Blake, of which we have thus far spoken, form the destructive portion of his philosophy, the strong reaction of his imaginative mode of thought against the materialistic, rationalistic, moralistic thought of his time; against the interpretation of mere appearances or even of manifest forces as final reality. Reality was to him no meaningless *dig-an-sich,* no groundless *will-to-live,* but substance manifesting itself in appearance and force which are in themselves unreal and delusions. Being was to him as it is to one of our present

[1] Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human," p. 217.

philosophers,[1] something intellectual and spiritual; something to which the intellectual and spiritual self of man approximates. We see, therefore, how natural it was for Blake to oppose the Hobbist self which was based in nature, and also the naturalistic view of the world held by Bacon, Newton, and Locke. We may see, too, that he would naturally oppose both the theory of eternal and immutable morality which laid emphasis on the external moral law with its obligation to restraint, and its merely practical repudiation by Mandeville. Both the irrationalism and immoralism of Blake went deeper into the spiritual nature of man, and for that reason repudiated the shallower views.

This destructive portion of Blake's philosophy is, however, not all. He had, also, a constructive philosophy to be found in his startling theory of individualism. Blake was, by no means the first individualist in the world, all great men being, more or less, individualists. Perhaps the supreme example of individualism is Christ, whose individualism is usually overlooked in the emphasis placed upon his altruism. Blake is, however, the first writer, the first philosopher, to be the advocate of individualism as a definite theory of life. It is not individualism in any crass form that he advocates, such as the egoism of Hobbes. Such egoism, we have said, he names "selfhood," using this word to indicate the lower form of selfishness that must be put off. Man must be himself. This self is, however, not something given, but something to be attained with difficulty. It is not the self of Peer Gynt, the selfhood of sense, sealed up, that Blake lauds. Like Ibsen, he believes that a man "must will

[1] C. G. Shaw, "The Ego and Its Place in the World," p. 417.

himself,"[1] and win his individuality by the putting off of the self-hood of sense and reason, and the putting on of the higher and truer self of imagination and freedom. Throughout Blake's longest poem this process is called "the building of Jerusalem."[2] It is essentially a mental process, a redemption from the thralldom of natural law and facts, from the material world. Blake, like Kant, believes that "the mind is the lawgiver to nature,"[3] but he goes further. Where Kant believes the mind must necessarily view things under the forms of time and space and causality, Blake believes that the mental vision may transcend the finite and "perceive infinity," and see that "That which is, is not, and that which is not, is."[4] Analytic reason must yield to inspiration.

In promulgating this theory of individuality, Blake is the first philosopher to use the word self-hood, as we use it today, though even he refers to it (with one exception), as the lower self, that must be cast off.

Not only does Blake formulate a fairly consistent theory of individualism, but he has a definite idea of the method by which it is to be attained. This is to be done through art. Using the word art, in its broadest sense, to denote all that is beautiful and spiritual in life, Blake says: "Art is the business of life."[5] To him, "Nature is one form of mental existence and art is another and a higher form,"[6] but art must be freed from memory and mere understanding, and reach upward to the realms of imagination. For this

[1] Ibsen, "Emperor and Galilean," II., Act. III., p. 37
[2] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 227.
[3] Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," p. 103.
[4] Ibsen, "Emperor and Galilean," I., p. 100.
[5] Blake, "Reproduction of the Laocoon."
[6] Ellis and Yeats, Vol. 1, p. XII.

reason, perhaps, Blake prefers the Gothic to the Grecian, calling the Grecian, mathematical form, from the reasoning memory, while the Gothic is living form and eternal existence. He ever uses it as a symbol of free aspiration.

The emphasis placed by Blake upon art again connects him with the nineteenth, rather than with the eighteenth century, with the aesthetes and Nietzsche, rather than with Lawrence and Reynolds. Indeed, Nietzsche almost repeats him in saying that "Art and not morality is the proper metaphysical activity of man."[1] This theory has in its Blakean form been consciously or unconsciously preached by most great men, in that they have ever shown forth something beautiful or noble as the aim of life. And this beautiful or noble idea is just what Blake would call art, creation, or "the building of Jerusalem." "Prayer is the study of art: praise is the practice of art."[2]

Since free imagination produces poetry, Blake uses poetry as its symbol "Art and poetry, by constantly using symbolism, continually remind us that 'nature itself is a symbol.' To remember this is to be redeemed from nature's death and destruction."[3] For this reason Blake says:

"Poetry fettered, fetters the human race. Nations are destroyed or flourish in proportion as their poetry, painting and music are destroyed or flourish."[4] To cultivate the imagination is, however, not the work of a moment. Man is "a creature of earth," as well as "akin to the sea and the air."[5] He wishes to free himself from sense, but cannot. He is too apt to become mere "hand" instead of "head." By "hand" Blake symbolizes

[1] Nietzsche, "Birth of Tragedy," p. 8.
[2] Blake, "Reproduction of the Laocoon."
[3] Ellis and Yeats, Works of Blake, Vol. I., p. 12.
[4] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 3.
[5] Ibsen, "Little Eyolf," p. 136.

the mechanical worker. He ever decries the merely industrial. Like Aristotle, whose emphasis on the analytic he criticises, he believes that mental activity, "contemplative energy,"[1] is the proper work of mankind, and not mere activism, that spends itself on material things. Hand, the industrial worker, who acts but cannot think, the man in the second class of Plato's "Republic," represents to Blake "Pride and self-righteousness, who has absorbed all his brethren in his might; by war and death winning the labor of the husbandman."[2]

"Awkwardness armed in steel, folly in a helmet of gold. Weakness with horns and talons, ignorance with a ravening beak. Every emanative joy forbidden as a crime. Inspiration denied, genius forbidden by laws of punishment."[3] Such is Blake's picture of society under industrial rule. For a writer of the eighteenth century it is not a bad characterization of "plutocracy." Blake would have been a vigorous opponent of the present-day "industrial efficiency" cry, and he would have opposed it because it tends to mass people and to efface individuality.

The first step in attaining the individuality of art is to put off selfhood. The Hobbist ego does not receive Blake's approval." All that can be annihilated must be annihilated, that the children of Jerusalem may be redeemed from slavery."[4] In the *Book of Milton,* Blake causes that poet to say:

> "I must cleanse the face of my spirit by self-examination.

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[1] Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics," p. 338.
[2] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 9.
[3] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 9.
[4] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 42-43.

To bathe in the waters of life, to wash off
the not-human.
I come into self-annihilation and the grandeur of inspiration."[1]

This quotation shows clearly that Blake does not renounce crass egoism for altruism, nor for self-renunciation in the Schopenhaurian sense. He renounces a lower egoism, in favor of a higher egoism; selfishness in favor of real personality.

For the attainment of personality, of individuality man must put off not only the selfhood of sense, but he must destroy negation, or the analytical reasoning power, since this binds his mind to earth and starves the free, creative spirit. This reasoning power "is a false body, an incrustation over the face of my immortality: a selfhood which must be put off and annihilated always."[2] Here again Blake does not oppose one equal to another, but superimposes the spiritual over the material; as before the superimposed the spiritual over the physical; the spiritual being not only higher, but being the only real existence as opposed to the illusion of the physical and material. Against this task of self-annihilation and spiritual progress stands Satan, the reasoning power,"[3] "the great self-hood,"[4] who endeavors to make illusion seem real. In despair the spirit of eternal man cries out helplessly

"I cannot put off my human form; I strive, but strive in vain."[5] "Wherefore hast thou shut me into the winter of human life?"[6] "They know not why they love. Calling that love which is envy,

[1] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 43.
[2] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 43.
[3] "Jerusalem," p. 20.
[4] Ibid, p. 20.
[5] Ibid, p. 17.
[6] Ibid, p. 22.

revenge and cruelty, which separated the stars from the mountains, the mountains from man. And left man a little grovelling root outside of Himself."[1] All love is lost; terror succeeds and hatred instead of love. And stern demands of Right and Duty instead of Liberty."[2] Since by this putting off of Selfhood, man may find himself in reality, and so in the Book of Milton, the poet cries out:

> "I will go down to self-annihilation and eternal death,
> Lest the Last Judgment come and find me unregenerate
> And I be seized and given into the hands of my own selfhood."[3]

This imprisonment in the selfhood of sense or of reason, is the Blakean idea of eternal punishment. Like Ibsen, he looks forward beyond sense, beyond reason, to a third empire"[4] of the spirit, and of entrance into this empire men are deprived only through their own blindness and stupidity. The Last Judgment will not witness the division of men according to the standards of good and evil. Since as we have said, both of these Blake believed to be delusions of Satan or the reasoning power, his idea of the Last Judgment must have a different basis. This basis stamps Blake as an intellectualist *par excellence,* for on that day he claims, men will be divided into the wise and the foolish. Witness his own assertions:

"The combats of good and evil is eating of the Tree of Knowledge. The combats of truth and error is eating of the Tree of Life . . .

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[1] "Jerusalem," p. 17.
[2] "Jerusalem," p. 22.
[3] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 12.
[4] Ibsen, "Emperor and Galilean," pp. 105 and 114.

We don't find anywhere that Satan is accused of sin. He is only accused of unbelief, and thereby of drawing man into sin that he may accuse him. Such is the Last Judgment; a deliverance from Satan's accusations. Satan thinks that sin is displeasing to God. He ought to know that nothing is displeasing to God but unbelief and eating of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil."[1] Making thus of the Last Judgment intellectual judgment upon man's intellect, we may expect that he will reject material worldly advantages in favor of mental life. And that he does this, we may see from his own words. "What are the gifts of the spirit but mental gifts? When any individual rejects error and embraces truth, a last judgment passes upon that individual."[2]

Since Blake regards the mental as preferable to the moral Satan, "the great Selfhood" is not for him as for the orthodox theologian the symbol of active evil. He is rather passivity, dullness and cruel goodness. Note Blake's own characterization:

> "Satan making to himself laws from his own identity,
>
> Compelled others to serve him in moral gratitude and submission,
>
> Being called God; setting himself above all that is called God."[3]
>
> The stings of Satan are "To do unkind things with kindness, with power armed to say,
>
> The most irritating things in the midst of tears and love."[4]

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[1] Blake, "Prose Fragments," small ed., p. 255.
[2] Blake, "Prose Fragments," small ed., p. 252.
[3] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 9.
[4] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 10.

Thus from Blake's point of view, the orthodox theologian who believes that merely refraining from acts called evil will ensure his entrance into Heaven, will find some time that his whole life-view has been wrong, and that he, like Peer Gynt, is fit to be cast into the ladle and made over.[1] It is in this spirit that Blake causes the elect and the redeemed to meet, and the elect to say:

"We behold it is by Heavenly
Election, that we live;
Our virtues and cruel goodnesses
Have deserved Eternal Death."[2]

Mere self-denial is thus not only ineffective, but wrong:

"Men must be forgiven not only for
Sin and indulgence,
There must be forgiveness of virtue
And abstinence."[3]

This extreme statement is almost repeated by Nietzsche, who says, "Forgive us our virtues, so should we pray to mankind."[4]

For Blake, the selfhood of men separates them as does the Hobbist ego, while the pursuit of individuality, of mental activity will unite them. "The circle of individuality will widen out until other individualities are contained within it not *a* mind but all minds."[5] Like Schopenhauer, Blake believes that the "principium individuationis"[6] is just an illusion of the senses, under the dominion of space and time, and that "man is adjoined to man by the spirit of freedom (Jerusalem), in

[1] Ibsen, "Peer Gynt," Act V., p. 283.
[2] Blake, "Book of Milton," p. 11.
[3] Swinburne, "Essay on Blake," p. 265.
[4] Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human," p. 177.
[5] Ellis and Yeats, "Work of Blake," Vol. I., p. 244.
[6] Schopenhauer, "World As Will and Idea," p. 454-455.

every individual man."[1] With Paracelsus he would say, "He who tastes the crust of bread tastes all the stars and all the heavens."[2] "Pride of self-hood"[3] divides men, and to perceive his oneness with humanity he must pierce the veil of illusion which he calls "self." However great and glorious, however loving and merciful the individuality in selfhood, we are nothing."[4] To attain his own individuality man must recognize the individuality of others which should remain for him inviolable. "Man must learn to distingugish the eternal human that walks about in bliss or woe."[5] This perception of unity can come only through wisdom and mental striving, when man receives "a new self-hood"[6] and enters into himself "his real, immortal self."[7] Blake here unites his individualism with a form of humanitarianism and intellectualism. The greatest humanitarianism will mean the greatest individualism.

As the restraint from evil and the pursuit of moral virtue or mere reason is useless for the development of individuality, so it is useless also as the price of entrance into Heaven. Intellectual life is necessary, and so Blake says, "There is no God than that God who is the Intellectual fountain of Humanity."[8] Since this is so, he adds: "I care not whether a man is good or evil; all that I care is whether he is a wise man or a fool. Go put off holiness and put on intellect."[9] Since goodness is not the price of entrance into heaven, Blake declares that, "Men are admitted into heaven not because they have curbed their pas-

[1] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 44-45.
[2] [4] Ellis and Yeats, Vol. I., p. 253.
[3] Ibid, p. 45.
[5] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 49.
[6] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 52.
[7] Blake, "Book of Milton," II., p. 14.
[8] Blake, "Jerusalem," p. 91.
[9] Ibid, p. 91.

sions, but because they have cultivated their understandings. The treasures of heaven are not negations of passion, but realities of intellect. . . . The fool shall not enter heaven be he ever so holy. Holiness is not the price of entrance into heaven. Those who are cast out are those who, having no passions of their own, because no intellect, have spent their lives in curbing and governing other people's by the various arts of poverty and cruelty of all kinds. The modern Church crucifies Christ with the head downwards."[1] Blake in this denunciation of morality in favor of intelligence closely approximates to Bernard Shaw's view that "Heaven is the home of the masters of reality."[2]

Blake, while immoralistic and irrationalistic, yet retains an element usually connected with rationalism: namely, intellectualism, but instead of connecting it with rationalism he connects it with individualism. We have seen that Art is, for him, the means to the attainment of individualism, and that this Art is to be a purely mental activity. It is also to be a warm vital energy. Blake thus seems to escape both the coldness of rationalism and the blindness of sense through this aesthetical intellectuality, which is the intuitional rather than perceptual or conceptual. He is distinctly a preacher of the "third order of knowledge."[3]

He himself says:

"I know of no other gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the divine arts of imagination, the real and eternal world. . . . . To labour in knowledge is to build up Jerusalem and to despise knowledge is to despise Jerusalem

[1] Blake, "Prose Fragments," small ed., p. 252.
[2] Shaw, Bernard, "Man and Superman," p. 103.
[3] Spinoza, "Ethics," p. 87.

and her builders."[4]

Individualism: Blake and Stirner

In the discussion of Blake's irrationalism and immoralism we found that he both anticipated, and, for the most part, excelled the nineteenth century irrationalists and immoralists from Stirner to Nietzsche. With these men also individualism was at once the cause and the effect of their immoralism and irrationalism. Their individualism is not always constructive, as with Blake. This we shall see as we examine their theories to compare them with the theory of Blake.

Stirner's individualism is the core of his doctrine. His rebellion was essentially a rebellion against the idea of humanity, a humanity in which the individual should lose his personality. This personality is, to Stirner, the only thing worth having, and if he can reach it only through irrationalism and immoralism, why then he will be irrationalistic and immoralistic. "That I make myself and *be,* this alone, is reason, be I ever so irrational."[1] "Nothing is more to me than myself."[2] This ego of Stirner's while developed much more logically than in Ibsen or Nietzsche, is after all, only a negative self. Stirner states emphatically what the ego shall not be, to what he shall not yield, but he states in no definite way what the ego *shall* be. To say the ego is everything, is no more than to say it is nothing, unless the terms are defined. Here Stirner fails, at least, in great part. Blake, on the contrary, is always positive. While his individual is immoralistic and irrationalistic, he is also strong, vigorous, human, intel-

[4] Blake, "Jerusalem," pp. 226, 227, small ed.
[1] Stirner, "Ego and His Own," p. 461.
[2] Ibid, p. 6.

lectual, not Hand only, or Heart, but Head as well. He is the doer of intellectual deeds. Blake's idea of individuality thus transcends as well as anticipates that of Stirner.

Blake and Emerson

With the individualism of Emerson, Blake has more in common. Both are, as we have already said, sane philosophers, not rebels only. Both are constructive as well as destructive. Both have the ideal of strength. Both declaim against the obedience to merely external law, and argue that the only real worth must emanate *from* the individual not be imposed *upon* him. Neither Blake nor Stirner forget that individuality must be spiritual, not merely empirical; must be intellectual, not voluntaristic only. Both Blake and Emerson emphasize self-trust and scorn humility. We have already had Blake's view. Emerson says. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string."[1] "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist."[2] "I do not wish to expatiate, but to live. My life is not an apology, but a life."[3]

Like Blake, Emerson cries that man has been left outside of himself. "Man is timid and apologetic. He is no longer upright. He dares not say, 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage" . . . "I must be myself."[4] By this Emerson means, as Blake meant, not an empirical ego, not a selfish Peer Gynt, but a spiritual self, a personality. He believes, too, that most benevolence fails because of this lack of personality. "There must be very two, before there can be very one."[5] We cannot give ourselves to others till we have a *self* to give.

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[1] Emerson, "Self-reliance," p. 31.
[2] Ibid, p. 33.
[3] Ibid, p. 34.
[4] Emerson, "Self-reliance," p. 31
[5] Emerson, "Self-reliance," p. 33

In their individualism Blake and Emerson are thus much alike. Blake is, however, in spite of his obscure language, more consistently individualistic. As he is stronger, more violent in his rebellion, so he is stronger, more positive in his individualism. This is, perhaps, because he is more thoroughly a mystic. Emerson felt that oneness, the spiritual unity that lies behind, that works through all things, but Blake *lived* it. It was his world.

Individualism: Blake and Ibsen

With Ibsen, Blake has in common the struggle for, the ideal of individuality. But beside Blake, Ibsen's individualism dwindles down to a morbid rebellion against custom.

He is so pessimistic, so gloomy; his characters, especially the women, are so abnormal; his men so subnormal. Yet he has, of course much true inividualism which does not neglect the unity of humanity, even while it spurns the usual interpretation of humanity. When Nora was told she must not forget she was a wife and a mother, she exclaimed, "I believe that before all else I am a human being!"[1] "I must make up mind which is right, society or myself."[2] And she awoke a turmoil that has scarcely ceased to echo, a proof of the strength of the chain by which "law and order" have bound us. When Ibsen in Peer Gynt says: "To be one's self one must slay one's self,"[3] he does not, I think, refer to rigorism, but to the slaying of the selfish self (what Blake calls self-annihilation), in favor of the higher, spiritual self. He makes this clearer in *Rosmersholm,* and in *When We Dead Awaken.*

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[1] Ibsen, "The Doll's House," p. 147.
[2] Ibid, p. 149.
[3] Ibsen, "Peer Gynt," p. 252.

Ibsen is, perhaps, the individualist who has come nearest to popularity. This partly because of his doctrine, partly because of its dramatic form; but when one turns from Ibsen it is with a sense of gloom, of pessimism, of failure, that causes one to wish with Hilda Wangel "O, if one could only sleep it all away!"[4] This is, perhaps, the chief difference between his individualism, and the stern yet joyous individualism of Blake.

Individualism: Blake and Nietzsche

Last of the great nineteenth-century individualists who followed Blake, is Nietzsche. Let us see how his theory of individualism compares with that of his predecessor. We have seen that Nietzsche's immoralism was more violent and less logical and coherent than that of Blake. In his *Zarathustra* he develops the idea of the Superman who shall be beyond good and evil. His superman is, however, intelligently selfish. He must have a plentitude of power. His happiness is to be found through the exercise of power, and he must do all to increase power. His pleasure alone determines good and evil. He must give "the highest affirmation to all that is questionable and strange in existence itself."[1] Not good, not joy, not even intellect, but *power* must be the goal of the superman.

The Superman

Contrast with Blake

In this ideal we shall see that Nietzsche differs fundamentally from Blake, however much they appear, on the surface, to be alike. The individual in Blake is to be beyond good and evil, but this does not depend upon his pleasure as with superman. It depends upon the purification of the spiritual self who shall finally come to see that with God all is good.

[4] Ibsen, "Master Builder," p. 333.
[1] Nietzsche, "Birth of Tragedy," p. 192.

Moreover, while Blake and Nietzsche both believe in strength, in power, in Blake it is not selfish power. Though he believes that strong and weak cannot be justly governed by the same laws, yet he could never have advocated a class of superman who should exploit a *slave-class* for their own pleasure. He never excluded humanity. We are all one in essence; but it must be a humanity of individuals, not a humanity of nonentities.

Lastly, Nietzsche's superman is not primarily intellectual. His goal is power, and while it must be intelligent power, still the will-to-power stands highest. Intelligence stands higher than the physical or the moral, but it is still second. With Blake, it is different. Men must "cultivate their understandings." Intellectual labor is the only labor. It is "the building of Jerusalem." Through wisdom the self wins its freedom. One of the chief causes of our submission to moral law, to custom, to society, is our stupidity. With Nietzsche the superman *breaks through* these barriers, regardless of hurt to others. With Blake, the strong man transcends these barriers, drawing others with him. The superman destroys, the individual builds.

CONCLUSION.

Freedom, complete liberty for spiritual development through creative energy from the laws of reason, freedom from moral obligation, freedom from all laws except that of one's own eternal, spiritual being; this is the gospel of Blake. He is typical, not of the philosophers of his own country, but of the philosophical rebels of the nineteenth century. He is immoralistic, in the manner of Nietzsche in his reversal of the stand-

ards of good and evil. He is irrationalistic as is Stirner in his objection to the restraints of analytic reason. Like Emerson, he believes in strength, and like Emerson he is constructive.

Like Ibsen, Blake declaims against traditional theism with its awe-inspiring, but ancient Jehovah and its rule of external authority. Like Ibsen, too, he proclaims, not altruism versus egoism, but a heirarchy, in which the spiritual self is superimposed upon the physical. Like Bernard Shaw, Blake puts ordinary conduct within the sphere of time, and makes heaven the home of the intellect.

Blake is thus essentially modern in form, and in thought, and he certainly lived as he wrote. For him Art *was* "the business of life, and the unseen was far more real than the world of Nature, the visible world. He might have said of himself as he made Milton say:

> "Mine to teach men to despise death, and to go on
> In fearless majesty annihilating self.
> Laughing to scorn thy laws and terrors
> . . . .
> I come to discover before Heaven and Hell
> thy self-righteousness
> In all its hypocritical turpitude;
> These wonders of Satan's holiness,
> Showing to the earth the idol virtues of the natural heart."[1]

Blake we see, may now be classed with Plato, with Hegel, with Spinoza, as an intellectualist and visionary, though it be his visions have an element of truth, of beauty, and permanency wanting the philosophy of the voluntarist and realist, Blake with his disregard of the material, and his theory of reality as something spiritual,

[1] Blake, "Book of Milton."

satisfies the love of the human mind for substance, for permanency beyond the permancy of facts. The emphasis which Blake places upon the free imaginative, creative intellect as the supreme spiritual gift of men and its cultivation as the supreme work of mankind, not only places him high among the intellectualists who, like Aristotle, believe in the work of contemplation, but it satisfies the strong desire of the human spirit for culture, and for creation, for this creation of the purely spiritual is man's peculiar gift, and his only after much striving and travail of soul.

Lastly, Blake is the first philosopher to place selfhood upon a philosophical place, and to see that not by mere altruism or benevolence, or even by virtue could one be truly "man" creative and spiritual. He saw that this was to be done only by the cultivation of one's personality to the uttermost, through the mind, and the free imagination. Thus he raised egoism from the crass form of the Hobbist ego, which had been defended or opposed for a century or more, to something high, something spiritual and real, to be striven after by all, but attained only by the master-minds of the world.

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